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City of Branson

110 West Maddux
Branson, MO 65616
417-337-8526

Public Information Department
jadams@bransonmo.gov

NEWS RELEASE

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Contact: Ted Martin, Division Chief 337-8580

Sub-freezing temperatures are predicted again this week and the Branson Fire Department reminds area commercial business owners to insure minimum heat is maintained throughout buildings protected with an automatic fire sprinkler system.

Commercial properties across the city including shopping centers, motels and hotels, along with condominiums, and other area attractions are typically protected by automatic fire sprinkler systems. These systems are installed for life safety purposes with a focus on protecting evacuation routes as well as property conservation. Sprinkler systems are designed to extinguish small fires before they have a chance to rage out of control.

However, many Branson businesses and attractions close for the holidays or for a short break over the months of January and February. When a fire sprinkler system is allowed to freeze, devastating consequences may occur.

"If a building is closed and the heat turned off, a fire sprinkler system will freeze up if we experience sub-freezing temperatures for two or three days in a row," said Branson Fire Division Chief Ted Martin. "If a fire does occur, the sprinkler system may not operate properly due to ice build-up in the system."

Martin said the most common problem is a fracture in the supply piping due to the expanding water as it freezes, which in turn may cause devastating water damage.

Three weeks ago the fire department responded to over a dozen sprinkler breaks causing thousands of dollars of unnecessary water damage. Even if temperatures plummet for a couple of days and no pipes break, sprinkler systems have also failed as the temperatures rise, causing fractures in the pipe, according to Martin.

"We encourage property owners to inspect their attic areas to insure that there are no exposed pipes, and that all areas of the building are maintained with minimal heat of 45 to 50 degrees," said Martin. "This will allow radiant heat to go throughout the building and help prevent the system from freezing."

For more information about fire sprinkler systems and their maintenance, contact the fire department at (417) 337-8580.